



Briefing from the Superintendent

Buck Island Reef National Monument (BUIS), an 880 acre park in the U. S. Virgin Islands, was expanded by Presidential Proclamation on January 17, 2001 pursuant to Section 2 of the Antiquities Act, 16 U.S.C. 431. The expansion occurred several days before former President Clinton's term expired. The political leaders in the territory along with several fishing groups were very upset by this expansion. The territory's Delegate to Congress and the Governor of the Virgin Islands requested a legal opinion from the General Accounting Office (GAO) as to: the legality of the Monument; if the President had the authority to expand the park; and were the submerged lands under territorial or federal ownership. In November 2002 the GAO issued an opinion that stated that the President had the authority under the Antiquities Act to expand the park on federally owned lands, and that the monument was legal because the expansion took place on federal submerged lands. The Monument expansion, 18,135 acres of submerged lands, added essential marine communities not originally within the park boundary. The expansion supersedes the original Monument legislation, eliminating all extractive uses, prohibiting boat anchoring except by permit, and authorizing the park to write a General Management Plan, including vessel management, by January 2003. The addition of these submerged lands to the Monument increased the park management area by over 2000 percent. Critical to the success of the non-extractive prohibitions is the demarcation of the boundary, adequate law enforcement and resource management staff, and establishment of an educational outreach program on the benefits of the Monument to the community. A biological assessment and inventory of the natural resources is needed to document current resource conditions and the recovery of the ecosystem once all extractive uses are eliminated.

Current Park Status:

- On May 5, 2003 the Interim regulations went into effect after waiting for several months for the GAO's opinion on the legality of the monument expansion.
 - Currently working to educate the community on the new prohibitions in the monument.
 - A new General Management Plan study has begun and should be completed within the next two years.
 - Currently hiring seasonal rangers to patrol the expanded park and recruiting for permanent rangers.
 - Completed bi-annual fish and conch census with our NOAA Biogeography partners.
 - Begun assessment of spiny lobster population with Florida Marine Research Institute.
 - GPS coordinates for new park boundary are available for users to download to personal or ship-board GPS units to help visitors recognize park expanded boundaries.
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For further information on issues and activities at Christiansted NHS contact:

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